

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Without prejudice, this listing of the claims replaces all prior versions and listings of the claims in the present application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

Claims 1 to 3. (Canceled).

4. (Currently Amended) A method for generating a digital watermark for an electronic document, comprising:

- determining a first hash value of the document;
- generating the watermark as a function of a proof of identity identification and the first hash value of the document;
- providing a secret key for making the watermark visible;
- embedding the watermark in the document;
- restoring the document to an original state by removing the watermark using the secret key;
- determining a hash value of the restored document; and
- verifying ownership of the document by comparing the hash value of the restored document and the first hash value,

wherein the generating the watermark step includes generating the watermark as a function of the proof of identity identification, the first hash value of the document, and an authentic time stamp.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim [5] 4. wherein the authentic time stamp defines an embedding sequence.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the embedding step includes embedding a plurality of different watermarks in the document, and wherein the restoring step includes restoring the document to the original state by removing all of the different watermarks, the method further comprising:

- determining an original owner by comparing respective hash values in each of the different watermarks with the hash value of the restored document.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the restoring step includes restoring the document to the original state by removing all of the different watermarks in accordance with an embedding sequence.

9. (New) A method for generating a digital watermark for an electronic document, comprising:

- determining a first hash value of the document;
- generating the watermark as a function of a proof of identity identification and the first hash value of the document;
- providing a secret key for making the watermark visible;
- embedding the watermark in the document;
- restoring the document to an original state by removing the watermark using the secret key;
- determining a hash value of the restored document; and
- verifying ownership of the document by comparing the hash value of the restored document and the first hash value, wherein the generating the watermark step includes generating the watermark as a function of the proof of identity identification, the first hash value of the document, and an authentic time stamp.

10. (New) The method according to claim 9, wherein the embedding step includes embedding a plurality of different watermarks in the document, and wherein the restoring step includes restoring the document to the original state by removing all of the different watermarks, the method further comprising:

- determining an original owner by comparing respective hash values in each of the different watermarks with the hash value of the restored document,
- wherein the restoring step includes restoring the document to the original state by removing all of the different watermarks in accordance with an embedding sequence.